1:Glacken E-5 (1951-1952) 1953 AC7 Okinawa AC7

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Community Recreation

Were it not for the public holidays and festivals, the family celebrations and informal social gatherings, opportunities for recreation would be very limited. Seeing a Japanese motion picture usually involves going to another village. Young people, especially those studying English, go to American movies in Naha when they can afford it. Many went to see Hamlet when it played there.

A Naha troupe presents plays in the rural villages. These appearances are advertised by a sound truck travelling throughout the countryside. Plays are of two main types: the historical drama and those of domestic life and manners. The historical plays are usually based on the heroic age in Okinawa, and are so filled with episodes and sword play that it is difficult, even for an Okinawan, to follow the plot. All plays are given in Okinawan.

The plot of a play of manners is of more interest, since it is concerned with the conflicts of obligations, duties, and personal desires. One such play, The Chaste Woman and the Dutiful Son, concerns a married couple who have one son. The husband drank too much and went with another woman. The wife objected, the husband tells her he no longer wants her and desires a divorce. The divorce attained, he takes the other woman as a second wife and moves with her to Nago, where he lives. Twenty years after, the second wife becomes ill, and dies, and the husband finds it increasingly difficult to earn a livelihood. The first wife, in the meantime, anxious to bring up her child well, has sent him to school. At the age of 20 he has become a school teacher. The successful young man--becoming a teacher is a great success--marries. The young couple have a child and everyone is happy.

The father in Nago earns a precarious living selling firewood. One day he reads of the success of his son in a newspaper. (This provides the actor with an opportunity for exaggerated astonishment and much staggering around). More soberly, the father decides to visit the first wife and their son. Lack of pride and poverty permits him to do this.

The first wife gives him an angry reception. When he has forced his way into the house, there is a loud quarrel. The successful young school teacher returns home, sees the quarrel, and asks his mother the identity of the man. The mother replies that she does not know him. The son inquires the reason for such a violent quarrel between his mother and a stranger. The mother had previously told her son his father had died. She now says she lied, and in the ensuing revelations, the son weeps a little. The father implores his son to intervene in obtaining the forgiveness of his former wife. But she will not forgive--neither will she forget--and does not want the old man around at all. The son

536 reminds his mother that he is a school teacher, that if he does not permit his father to enter the house, he can no longer teach school. The mother yields; the son and his wife bring their child to the new found grandfather, and the play closes with the overjoyed grandfather fondling and holding the child in his arms.

In the play, the conflict is resolved by a balancing of obligation with pride. A real father would have been so ashamed that he would [829] never have returned, but then there would have been no play. Only a poor, lonely shameless and crafty fellow would have come back. But once he was back, the son had no alternative but to accept and honor him. The woman's power in the house and her devotion to her son are demonstrated, but she too must yield to the obligation of her son's filial piety, though she does this only after a determined and dignified resistance.

●545 Plays on the rural circuit start about 9 and end about 11 in the evening. The entertainment generally consists of an opening traditional dance by a woman, followed by a comedy skit, and a longer play, such as 536 the one just described. Comedy skits usually depend on clumsiness or obtuseness as the sources of their humor. One skit, for example, involved a thief entering a house at night. Clumsy and unsure of his way, he stumbled over everything, made loud noises, and was constantly in fright to see if some fresh stumble had awakened the house. Finally he manages to hide under a table, near which the members of the family are seated discussing a problem. His discovery, due to further awkward motions and noises, the chase, and his final apprehension close the skit.

545 Rural audiences are critical. Some actors cause laughter because their Okinawan pronunciation is considered poor, and the laughter often carries over to the serious parts. Delays between the acts are met with impatience, and there is some prompting from the audience. The admission is Y20 for adults and Y10 for children. The audience sits on the ground. These plays do not attract a large crowd unless the offering is a well liked play.

526 Sports and athletic meets are favorite recreations both for participants and observers. The sports mentioned by travellers 50 or 60 years ago, such as horse racing, boat racing, tugs of war, archery, and boxing have given way to a more organized athletic activity, inspired by the Japanese example. Only the boat racing and the rope tug of war have survived in these villages. Hinatogawa's boat race each year attracts villagers from miles around. All villages, at various times of the year, have a rope tug of war. The annual athletic meets, which will be discussed under education, were introduced into Okinawa about 50 or 60 years ago.

Amami Oshima, Okinawa, Miyako, and Yaeyama.[1] Although they appear to differ widely, mutual intelligibility prevails, and informants from other islands assured me that they had managed to understand Okinawan in a short time though most preferred to use Japanese rather than attempt the new dialect.

Okinawan Dialects The Okinawan dialect area, Okinawa and its offshore islands, contains many sub-dialects or local speech groups, all of which are easily mutually intelligible. It would be an exaggeration to state that there is a distinctive dialect for each community; yet the variety and diversity of local speech forms constantly impresses one. Nakasone has distinguished five dialects in the Kunigami area alone, and this does not include nearly a dozen and a half distinctive speech islands within the same area.[2] These local speech peculiarities are often pointed out with considerable pride and seem much prized as symbolic of a community's identity.

The dialects of Naha, Shuri, and certain of the larger towns such as Itoman and Yonabaru, are quite distinctive and easily recognized by the Okinawans. Naha dialect is most widely spoken and easily understood throughout the island, and because of its association with the capital carries the greatest prestige among Okinawan speakers. Old residents of Naha complain that their dialect has deteriorated and become coarsened since the war due to the heavy influx from other areas of people who speak the dialect imperfectly. By this they refer to the loss of certain polite forms and the inundations of Japanese. Some Shuri people will contend that the "best" Okinawan is spoken in their city. In the past this was undoubtedly a widely accepted point of view, but with the advent of Japanese administration---exile of the king, removal of the capital to Naha, abolition of the upper classes---Shuri's prestige as a cultural center rapidly declined. A number of informants, rural and urban, felt that the "purest" Okinawan was heard in the Naha theaters, particularly at the Naha Gekijō, where daily performances of modern and historical dramas are presented. Itoman dialect is considered to be very coarse and rough by the people of other communities, and hence is accorded a low prestige. This is in part due to certain prosodic features of the dialect which render it unlike other Okinawan dialects, but more likely it is due to the fact that this town largely derives its livelihood from fishing, an occupation regarded with opprobrium by farmers and urbanites alike. The neighboring farm village of Kanegusuku, though less than a quarter of a mile away and long associated with Itoman, preserves a dialect distinct from it.

This dialectic diversity on Okinawa reflects to a certain extent the physical isolation of the typical village, a tightly-nucleated cluster of dwellings surrounded by fields. It is also a product of the social structure in the Okinawan kingdom. Prior to annexation by Japan (1879), farmers were little more than serfs bound to the soil and forbidden to leave their native village, while the gentry and nobility were for the most part concentrated in the urban Naha-Shuri district. Rural villages tended to be isolated, self-sustaining units; most were composed of a dominant kin group (munchu) and several smaller and possibly remotely related kin groups, or of several unrelated kin groups more nearly equal in size. A munchu was made up of a number

[1] Miyanaga /Miyara/, 1950, p. 39.

[2] Nakasone, 1937, pp. 242-258.